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Security Council

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Provisional

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Thursday, 21 November 2002, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Wang Yingfan	(China)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Tafrov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tidjani
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mrs. d'Achon
	Guinea	Mr. Traoré
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Koonjul
	Mexico	Mr. Aguilar Zinser
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Russian Federation	Mr. Konuzin
	Singapore	Mr. Mahbubani
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Mekdad
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Letter dated 31 March 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1998/287)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-154A.

02-70338 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Letter dated 31 March 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Papua New Guinea to the United Nations (S/1998/287)

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea in which they request to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the discussion without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea) took a seat at the Council table; Mr. Dauth (Australia), Mr. Naidu (Fiji) and Mr. MacKay (New Zealand) took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to whom I give the floor.

Mr. Prendergast: During the last briefing on Bougainville, on 29 August, the Council was informed of progress achieved in implementing stages I and II of the weapons disposal plan, the target dates for which were 31 August and 30 September, respectively. As the Security Council may recall, the forward movement in the peace process was welcomed by the Council.

I have to report today that developments since August have included setbacks. The Bougainville parties have completed stage I. However, stage II containment has been completed in only half of the districts on the island. The number of new weapons collected since the last briefing grew only by a little more than 100, reaching a total of 1,684. More worrying still, seven containers were opened and 212 weapons removed from them. I shall say more about this later. The momentum for weapons disposal has definitely slowed down, and, as a result, the entire peace process has come under some strain.

It may be helpful if I give our assessment of what lies behind these developments. I would also like to inform the Council of what steps are being taken to address the difficulties that have arisen.

The setbacks in weapons containment can be explained essentially by two factors. The first lies in well-intended efforts to address the impatience of many ex-combatants, who are frustrated with the slow pace of their reintegration and rehabilitation. Two funds were created to assist the ex-combatants, one by the national Government and one by a bilateral donor. Problems related to disbursement from these funds and the erroneous perception that ex-combatants would now, in effect, be paid for turning in their weapons has led some of them to refuse to participate in the weapons-disposal process. Other broke into containers and retrieved their weapons.

The second factor has been a deliberate campaign of falsification and misrepresentation regarding the nature of the peace process by the followers of Francis Ona, the main Bougainvillian leader remaining outside of the peace process. Some people calling themselves Ona's affiliates or supporters have also broken into containers and stolen weapons, claiming that they were acting on his orders.

Discouraging as these developments are, I am pleased to report that, to the great credit of the ex-combatant leaders, they have responded with vigour to these challenges. A Peace Process Consultative Committee meeting was held in Arawa on 30 October. The meeting, chaired, as usual, by the United Nations mission — the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) — adopted a number of

decisions designed to make containers more secure, to foster more positive attitudes to weapons containment, and to place weapons collection back on track. Decisions were also taken to address problems related to usage of the two funds mentioned earlier. We were encouraged by the decision of former combatants to complete stage II containment by 24 December, declaring this to be a Christmas present for Bougainville.

As a follow-up to the Peace Process Consultative Committee and the decision on the new deadline for stage II containment, the two Bougainville faction leaders convened an extraordinary session in Arawa at the beginning of November. Participation extended beyond the usual Peace Process Consultative Committee membership to include unit, platoon and company commanders, as well as the provincial Administration. At this session, the participants received a briefing on all aspects of the Peace Agreement, examined issues which were impeding weapons collection and took corresponding actions. The session adopted a joint ex-combatants resolution that, among other things, called for their political leadership to enter into dialogue with the Me'ekamui Defence Force of Francis Ona. Following the Peace Process Consultative Committee meeting and the subsequent extraordinary session, the ex-combatants initiated direct contact with the military commander of Francis Ona.

The ex-combatants also adopted a detailed calendar of activities to be completed throughout the island leading up to 24 December, when the close of stage II containment should be declared. It is understood that the Alpha Company, the core of the Me'ekamui Defence Force, which has reaffirmed its commitment to work along with the other districts in weapons disposal, could take a bit longer to reach stage II. UNPOB is expected to witness the signing of the declarations that individual districts will make confirming that they have completed stage II.

Meanwhile, beginning in September, UNPOB held a series of meetings throughout the island with the chiefs, with churches and with women's groups. The purpose of those encounters was to mobilize and engage these important groups in order to promote maximum community participation in the weapons-disposal process.

In all of its activities relating to weapons collection, UNPOB has enjoyed a close and fruitful working relationship with the Peace Monitoring Group. The Peace Monitoring Group has provided valuable logistical support to the collection of weapons and their storage. It has also served as a reliable link among the various communities of the island. Thanks to its island-wide patrols, the Monitoring Group brings to UNPOB's attention particular issues requiring our joint intervention. In addition, the Group facilitates the settling of many cases on its own. We very much look forward to continued fruitful cooperation with the Peace Monitoring Group.

I might say a word about the Bougainville Constitutional Commission. The Commission has been consulting with the people of the various districts of the island to ascertain their views on what should be the content of the Bougainville constitution. The Commission is expected to produce the first draft constitution by 1 January 2003. Following that, consultations will be held with the Bougainville interim provincial government, the Bougainville People's Congress and, of course, the national Government. The target date for the completion of the final draft constitution and for a report on it is the end of January 2003.

The draft constitution will then be considered by the Constituent Assembly, which is expected to be established by February 2003 and to complete its work by March 2003. However, the actual start of its work will, among other things, depend on the verification by UNPOB of the satisfactory completion of stage II of weapons containment.

A word about the challenges ahead: I ought to point out that little more than four weeks remain before the 24 December deadline set for the completion of stage II of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. At the last Peace Process Consultative Committee meeting and the follow-up session, UNPOB sent a very clear message to the ex-combatants that the credibility of weapons disposal and, perhaps, of the entire peace process would be at stake if the deadline were not met. We also re-emphasized that progress towards autonomy depended on the completion of stage II and on its verification.

Even if the ex-combatants were to declare that the 24 December target date had been met, UNPOB would still have to verify and certify that the weapons had,

indeed, been committed to containers, as called for by the plan. This process, on current form, seems most unlikely to be completed by 31 December, especially in view of the recent break-ins and the stealing of 212 weapons. UNPOB's continued presence will be needed on the island to help Bougainvilleans return those weapons and complete stage II, including certification by UNPOB. Stage III of the weapons disposal plan, at which time the parties must decide on the final fate of the weapons, is still ahead. A decision on the fate of the weapons is to be made within four and a half months after the coming into force of the constitutional amendments. UNPOB is required to be available to verify and certify whether there has been substantial compliance by the parties in the handing in of weapons and whether the level of security of the weapons creates a situation which is conducive to the holding of elections. Assuming, therefore, that the December target date is respected, UNPOB needs to have a reasonable amount of time to verify and to certify stage II containment.

Finally, the Peace Process Consultative Committee meeting held at the end of October formally requested that UNPOB and the Peace Monitoring Group remain on Bougainville until after the elections for the autonomous government have been held. According to the current timetable, these elections should be held before the end of June 2003. But, naturally, the actual date will depend on the extent to which the Bougainville Constitutional Commission and the Constituent Assembly stick to their present programmes of work.

In view of the critical tasks to be performed by UNPOB in the coming year, the Secretary-General has, as the Council knows, written to the Council recommending the extension of UNPOB's mandate for a further year. We fully expect that all of the stages in the peace process will be completed during that period. As the Council is also aware, the Government of Papua New Guinea has requested such an extension. Before deciding to write to the Council, the Secretary-General dispatched an assessment mission to Bougainville. The mission, led by the Director of the Asia and Pacific Division of my Department, arrived on the island in time to attend the Peace Process Consultative Committee meeting. The mission held wide-ranging consultations with the Papua New Guinea Government, the Bougainville parties and the countries participating in the Peace Monitoring Group, all of whom confirmed that the continued presence of UNPOB was essential for the successful completion of the peace process.

Mr. Aguilar Zinser (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, my country welcomes your return, Sir, and the fact that you are presiding over this public meeting of the Security Council. We congratulate China on the political process it conducted through its Party Congress.

My delegation wants to thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Kieran Prendergast, for the information he has just given the Council in his briefing on developments in the situation in Bougainville. I also wish to express my country's recognition of the work of the representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Noel Sinclair, head of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, and of his staff. We also recognize the work and support of Governments that have participated in the Peace Monitoring Group: the Governments of Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu.

I also reiterate Mexico's support for the peace process and our wish that all the parties concerned will continue to work for a peaceful and definitive solution to the conflict. We also support continued cooperation by the United Nations and the international community as a whole with the Bougainville authorities in order to achieve the economic and social recovery of that country.

In that context, my country emphasizes how important it would be for the Security Council to appeal to donor countries to support the establishment of the economic and social conditions and infrastructure conducive to consolidating a peaceful transition towards Bougainville's political future.

My country is concerned at the delays and obstacles to the process in Bougainville, on which Mr. Prendergast has fully briefed us. We believe that it is essential that this process be completed and that it would be desirable to conclude the process within the deadlines established for it. One crucial element for meeting those deadlines is the complete implementation of the weapons disposal plan which is under way, in the circumstances that have been reported to us.

There are therefore a few questions that we would like to ask Mr. Prendergast on the possible impact of that delay. We wish to emphasize the possible impact

that a delay in weapons collection might have on the very process of drafting the constitution and on the establishment of the autonomous government. What would be the consequences of a delay in the work of the Consultative Committee and of a delay in meeting the deadlines set for the adoption of the constitution and the holding of elections leading to establishment of autonomous government, taking into consideration that elections are planned to be held, as Mr. Prendergast recalled, by the end of June 2003? Some authorities in Papua New Guinea, for example the Minister for Inter-Governmental Affairs, have said that as of now it seems unlikely that that date will be met. What are the prospects in view of this likely failure to meet this schedule, and what would be the consequences of the above-mentioned delay on the conclusion of the work of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and of the Peace Monitoring Group?

In addition, my Government wonders what might happen if some members of the Peace Monitoring Group were to withdraw before the scheduled dates. Once again we thank Under-Secretary Prendergast for the information he has given us.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank the representative of Mexico for his kind words addressed to me and my country.

Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in French*): Welcome, again, to New York. My country would like to hail the determination and the sense of political responsibility of the leadership of Papua New Guinea and also the peace efforts made, especially by Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, who are giving substantial assistance in the implementation of the ceasefire agreement and are helping to assure political stability in Bougainville.

Considerable progress has been achieved in the implementation of the Peace Agreement signed on 30 August 2001, and this should be welcomed. The Peace Agreement constitutes indisputable success for the people of Bougainville, as well as for Papua New Guinea, which has clearly shown its good will in settling the conflict in a peaceful and democratic manner.

Bulgaria also welcomes the adoption of the legislative acts for the implementation of the Peace Agreement, especially the amendments to the constitution and basic law regarding peace talks in Bougainville. While we note with satisfaction the progress achieved for the implementation of the weapons disposal plan, my delegation is still concerned over information given us by Sir Kieran regarding some difficulties in the process, which is, however, essential for organizing elections in order to set up an autonomous Bougainville government. These are important safeguards for the holding of a referendum on the future of Bougainville.

Bulgaria supports the joint efforts of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and the Peace Monitoring Group, as well as the efforts of the parties to find clear-cut criteria for implementing stage II of the weapons disposal plan.

Finally, Bulgaria welcomes the intention of the Secretary-General to extend the mandate of the office for a one-year period. This will enable us to ensure the implementation of stage II of the weapons disposal plan, organize elections for an autonomous Bougainville government, and complete the peace process.

Mr. Koonjul (Mauritius): Like other delegations, let me thank you, Sir, for convening this open meeting today on Bougainville. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Sir Kieran Prendergast, for his useful and comprehensive briefing on developments in the Bougainville peace process.

We commend the authorities and the people of Bougainville for their continuing commitment to implement the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Bougainville is yet another concrete example where the Security Council and the international community, and especially the neighbouring countries, are playing a significant role in taking the peace process forward.

We take particular note of the progress towards achievement of the goals set in the Peace Agreement, signed at Arawa on 30 August 2001. We are happy to learn that agreements have now been concluded on the issue of a referendum to determine the eventual political future of Bougainville, within the framework of the constitution of Papua New Guinea.

We share the view that the peace process is on the right track, despite some setbacks. The Bougainville Peace Agreement is indeed a major watershed in the political history of Bougainville and Papua New Guinea.

My delegation wishes to express its appreciation and support to the United Nations Political Office in

Bougainville (UNPOB) which, despite its small size, has done a remarkable job in actively coordinating, implementing and carrying out the agreed weapons disposal plan. We are happy to note that, despite practical difficulties, UNPOB has successfully carried out the stage I process in the weapons disposal plan. We are, however, concerned about the information Sir Kieran has just given us on the growing number of incidents in which trunks and containers have been forced open and guns removed. These incidents would negatively impact on the good work performed by UNPOB and the Peace Monitoring Group and can risk derailing the whole process, thereby hampering the completion of stage II. We commend, however, the initiatives undertaken by the senior commanders, both from the Bougainville Revolutionary Army and the Bougainville Resistance Forces, in investigating, advising and encouraging the offenders to return these weapons. We hope those responsible will do so in the interest of peace and stability.

The progress in weapons disposal is inextricably linked to the establishment of the autonomous Bougainville government by the legal device which makes the provision on autonomy and referendum in the new part XIV of the national constitution conditional upon verification and certification by UNPOB that stage II of the agreed weapons disposal plan has been achieved. It is therefore extremely important for everyone to ensure the completion of the weapons disposal plan. We are pleased to note that a total of 1,684 guns have so far been disposed of, including 301 high-powered factory made weapons. We urge the people of Bougainville to strictly respect the provisions of the Plan and put aside political and other differences in the spirit of community building.

As in any peace process, reconciliation and the reintegration of ex-combatants remain absolute priorities to ensure long term and sustainable peace. The early reintegration of former combatants and their engagement into gainful employment should therefore be addressed urgently. We appreciate the setting up of the Bougainville Ex-Combatants Trust Fund account, established under AusAID. We encourage the donor communities to inject more funds into this programme for its effective implementation.

The peace-building process in Bougainville cannot be realizable without heavy investment in the reconstruction of the infrastructure and the restoration of civil authority. My delegation recognizes and welcomes the desire of the Bougainville people to participate actively in the rebuilding of their province. It is therefore important that priority be given to health, education, agriculture and basic infrastructure. No peace dividend would be possible without progress in these fields. We appeal to the international community to provide assistance in this regard.

My delegation notes with satisfaction that there has been significant progress, even though the initial timetable has not been respected due to circumstances not attributable to the responsibility of the parties in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We strongly believe that the Security Council must continue to remain fully engaged in the process and we therefore support the request of the Government of Papua New Guinea, as well as the decision of the Secretary-General, to extend the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville, which expires on 31 December 2002, for a further 12-month period.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): First, I would also like to thank Sir Kieran for his briefing on recent developments in the Bougainville peace process. In spite of recent setbacks and challenges that need to be addressed, the overall impression is that the process continues on the right track and that it has now reached its final stages.

We are pleased to note that the United Nations, through the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), is maintaining its vital role in promoting peace and stability on the island. In addition to overseeing implementation of the weapons disposal plan, UNPOB and the Peace Monitoring Group are instrumental in terms of encouraging mutual trust and confidence between the parties.

My delegation takes the view that sustained peace-building efforts are crucial in any comprehensive strategy aimed at achieving durable peace. The scope of peace-building activities currently being undertaken by different actors in Bougainville covers a variety of initiatives, from reconciliation of former enemies to reintegration of ex-combatants and the promotion of development and economic recovery. However, the successful implementation of those initiatives depends, to a large extent, on the agreed weapons disposal plan being fully implemented. Moreover, only through an appropriate arrangement as to the final fate of the weapons will there be conditions conducive to the

effective implementation of autonomy and the provisions for a referendum in the Agreement, and for the autonomous Bougainville Government to be established.

As a means of promoting those goals and safeguarding the investments already made in Bougainville, my delegation supports the extension of UNPOB's mandate until the end of 2003. That will allow the United Nations Office to oversee the implementation of the pending components of the Peace Agreement, and thereby to contribute to the final sealing of the peace process.

I would also like to take this opportunity to encourage the Government of Papua New Guinea and its Bougainville counterparts to remain committed to the peace process and to do their utmost to keep it on track through its last stage. Particular emphasis should be placed on overcoming current obstacles to effective weapons disposal relating, inter alia, to logistics, communications and mobilization.

Finally, all parties need to engage in long-term planning in order to promote peaceful coexistence, thereby making the current process more self-sustaining.

Bougainville is not a major item on the agenda of the Security Council. It is, nevertheless, a vivid example of the constructive role the United Nations can play in a comprehensive peace-building strategy, even with relatively small resources. Allow me therefore to end by paying tribute to UNPOB for the very good work the Office is undertaking, and to the members of the Peace Monitoring Group for their valuable support for United Nations efforts in Bougainville.

Mr. Williamson (United States of America): Following Papua New Guinea's independence in 1975, large segments of the population on the island of Bougainville continued to feel separate from Port Moresby owing to historical, cultural and ethnic concerns. The development of the copper mine in the 1980s became a complicating factor. In 1989 fighting broke out, and during the 1990s bitter separatist fighting took place on the island of Bougainville that claimed thousands of lives.

In 1998, after nearly a decade of conflict and with nearly 10,000 dead by some accounts, the parties admirably chose to resolve their differences through negotiation. Since its creation, in 1998, the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) has played a valuable role in facilitating the return of stability to the island. The Bougainville Peace Agreement successfully ended the fighting, preserved the peace that began four years ago, and put the island on track to autonomy and a referendum on independence.

The key remaining task for UNPOB is to reduce the risk of re-incitement of violence by collecting, storing and disposing of weapons on the island. The Bougainville Peace Agreement envisioned that UNPOB would complete its work around the middle, and not later, than the end of 2002. A year ago, when the Security Council discussed a similar request for a 12-month extension of UNPOB's mandate, we were informed by UNPOB's Director, Ambassador Noel Sinclair, that the mission was expected to conclude "not later than the end of 2002". We believe goals need to be set based on accurate projections and, once they are set, everything possible should be done to try to achieve them.

The Council is now being asked to endorse an additional year beyond that target end-date. We understand that the reasons that have been cited for the delay include a loss of momentum in the peace process owing to national elections in Papua New Guinea, an incident of looting of some of the arms collected and containerized as part of the arms disposal process and occasional inclement weather, which has kept UNPOB's helicopter grounded. Frankly, we do not find this to be a particularly compelling case for another 12-month extension.

We note that progress towards greater autonomy and a referendum cannot be made until UNPOB has certified the completion of stage II of the arms disposal process, namely, the containerization of all collected arms. We applaud the good work that UNPOB has done in facilitating the collection and storage of over 1,500 weapons so far this year. At the same time, we would like to see a clearer and more measured indication from the Secretariat of the end-game for weapons disposal and the exit strategy for the UNPOB mission as a whole. We wonder, for example, how many weapons are there left to collect; what UNPOB's plan is, on a weekly basis, to achieve the collection and disposal of all remaining weapons; and how UNPOB will draw down its presence as the end of the mission approaches.

Again, the United States supports the peace process. We applaud the sincere efforts by the leaders on all sides of this conflict to resolve their differences through a peaceful process. We appreciate the efforts of UNPOB to contribute to the successful, peaceful completion of this process.

This morning Under-Secretary-General Prendergast noted other considerations that may justify a year-long extension of UNPOB, matters that warrant our consideration and review. We note that UNPOB's mandate does not expire until December 31, and suggest that the Security Council meet at a later date, perhaps early next month, to consider this issue further. The United States preliminary view is that a six-month extension of UNPOB's mandate is adequate. In the coming days, we would hope to get answers to the questions raised, and to better understand the other considerations raised this morning.

Mr. Mekdad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to express our appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this important meeting on the situation in Bougainville, Papua New Guinea. I would also like to express our gratitude to Sir Kieran Prendergast, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his briefing this morning on the evolution of the peace process in Bougainville and on the role played by the United Nations in that regard. We also welcome among us the new Permanent Representative of Papua New Guinea, who will later shed more light on the peace process.

Undoubtedly, over a year after the signing of the Bougainville Peace Agreement, that territory has begun to move slowly towards building genuine peace, as envisioned in the Agreement of 30 August 2001, which was based on the three pillars of autonomy, referendum and weapons disposal. All of these tracks are intertwined. In this respect, we must recognize the great impact of two factors for success in the Bougainville peace process.

The first factor is the sincere efforts made by the Government of Papua New Guinea and its commitment to pursue the peace process. We must also acknowledge its achievements in completing all constitutional and legal measures in order to give the Bougainville Peace Agreement its legal status within the constitution of Papua New Guinea. This is a commendable achievement, and it should be supported.

The second factor is the important role played by the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and the Peace Monitoring Group in their efforts to facilitate the implementation of the Peace Agreement. This role merits our appreciation and support.

In view of the role played by UNPOB at this critical stage, and because of its active involvement in coordinating the implementation and consolidation of the responsibilities agreed upon — especially as the weapons disposal plan is reaching its second stage, to be completed on 24 December 2002 — Syria strongly supports the request of the Papua New Guinea Government that UNPOB's mandate be extended for a further 12 months, until the end of 2003.

The information given to us this morning on the peace process in Bougainville, the note from the Government of Papua New Guinea dated 26 August 2002, the ministerial statement by that country's Inter-Government Relations Minister before the Parliament, and the last memorandum of 20 November, which we just received, all clearly show the progress made towards restoring normalcy in Bougainville. This is the prevailing situation, despite some references to challenges, mainly by some parties such as Francis Ona outside the peace process, on the one hand, and the rehabilitation and development of the infrastructure, provision of services and attainment of economic development, on the other. In this regard, we think it is essential that international assistance by the donor States be continued and that the international community continue to fulfill its obligations.

In conclusion, we call for the redoubling of peace and rehabilitation efforts in Bougainville. We think that UNPOB still has contributions to make in the post-conflict phase, and therefore we feel that the 12-month extension is justified and should be supported. Thus, we must support and maintain UNPOB's work until the completion of its mandate.

Mr. How (Singapore): Like previous speakers, I thank Under-Secretary-General Sir Kieran for his briefing.

We commend the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) for the role it has played and continues to play in Bougainville. Ambassador Sinclair and his small team have not only helped to make possible a significant level of stability and security in Bougainville, but also have slowly but gradually

moved the conflict towards resolution. We also applaud the unwavering support and assistance extended by Papua New Guinea's neighbours towards this end.

Since the signing of the Peace Agreement in August 2001, the Papua New Guinea Government has demonstrated its commitment to the Agreement in very concrete ways. For example, it has delivered on its undertaking to make the necessary constitutional amendments to enshrine its agreements with the Bougainville parties, clearing the way for subsequent steps of the Peace Agreement to proceed. The Government is also working closely with UNPOB and other parties in the Peace Process Consultative Committee (PPCC) to implement the Agreement on the ground.

We are also heartened by the ministerial statement delivered by Papua New Guinea's Minister for Inter-Government Relations, Sir Peter Barter, two days ago. From his statement to the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea, it is clear not only that the Government is fully committed to the Bougainville Peace Agreement, but that it has a good appreciation of the obstacles in the way and of what needs to be done to overcome them. There can be no doubt that the Papua New Guinea Government deserves the continued support of the international community as it strives to implement the Agreement.

The Bougainville file has for some time now been a source of encouragement for Council members. This is because it reminds us that our efforts in this Council can, and often do, produce the desired results. It is all the more gratifying if we note the small outlay involved. UNPOB costs around $2 million per annum, not much more than what many other United Nations missions spend in a day. This is a very small price to pay to help the Government of Papua New Guinea resolve the Bougainville conflict and to bring peace, and with it the hope of a brighter future to some 180,000 people on the island.

This morning we heard that the implementation of stage II of the weapons disposal plan has been slower than expected. We should not be overly concerned about this, as long as it remains clear to us that all parties remain committed and that the delay does not threaten the peace process.

It is important that we not insist on fitting the implementation of the weapons disposal plan and the peace process as a whole to too rigid a time frame. An approach taking into consideration the problems on the ground, as well as local sensitivities and practices, is likely to serve us better. We therefore endorse the Secretary-General's intention to extend UNPOB's mandate by one year, to December 2003, to accommodate delays encountered during stage II of the weapons disposal plan.

Finally, it is not sufficient that peace be restored to Bougainville. For this peace to be sustainable, an effective administration and a viable local economy must be in place. Relevant United Nations agencies should therefore closely coordinate their efforts in Bougainville with donor countries in order to achieve peace and consolidate the peace.

Mr. Konuzin (Russian Federation)(*spoke in Russian*): The Russian Federation attaches great significance to the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 30 August 2001, which is a basis for the peace process in that country. We call upon all the parties to undertake timely and full implementation of the tasks set forth in the Agreement to establish autonomy, to conduct a referendum and to carry out steps for the collection and destruction of weapons.

A most important condition for progress in the peace process is a demonstration by the parties of political will and the desire to achieve a speedy solution to basic problems in the settlement of the conflict.

We highly value the efforts of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and the activities of its head, Ambassador Sinclair, as well as the Military Observer Group, to promote the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. We note the effectiveness of the work of UNPOB, which, over a short period of time and with limited resources, has been able to achieve significant results.

The delay in the implementation of the weapons collection and destruction plan in Bougainville is a cause for concern. We hope that all the parties, with the active support of the Government of Papua New Guinea, will intensify their efforts to eliminate weapons in the communities of Bougainville. Success in that area will have a decisive impact on progress in the post-conflict rehabilitation and peace-building processes in Bougainville and can help to establish favourable conditions for the international community's provision of necessary economic assistance to tens of thousands of Bougainvilleans.

Russia supports the positive efforts being undertaken to achieve a final settlement of the conflict in Bougainville, and it is prepared to contribute to future progress in that process.

Mr. Traoré (Guinea) (*spoke in French*): I should like to join previous speakers in thanking you, Mr. President, for having organized this public meeting on Bougainville. I should also like to express my delegation's appreciation to Sir Kieran Prendergast for his very useful briefing.

The Bougainville Peace Agreement, signed on 30 August 2001, emphasized three fundamental elements: autonomy, the holding of a referendum and a plan to eliminate arms in circulation. Since then, the Council has consistently encouraged the parties to implement those components in order to reach a final settlement of their dispute.

My delegation notes that, beyond several problems related to the collection of weapons and to the demobilization of combatants, the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement is proceeding normally. The achievements already attained have been made possible not only by the goodwill shown by the parties, but also by the important support provided by the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) and by the Peace Monitoring Group.

Here, we should like to thank all the countries and the institutions that are so involved in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. Thanks to those joint efforts, we can take a positive view of the actions undertaken to promote national reconciliation, the restoration of State authority and the reconstruction and economic development of the country.

While we encourage the various actors to redouble their efforts, my delegation would like to stress the need to accelerate the operations to collect, store and destroy weapons. In fact, we remain convinced that that is one of the essential conditions for restoring peace and fostering post-conflict recovery with the international community's kind support. In order to do that, the public awareness policy should be pursued with greater energy. Moreover, my delegation would like to urge the parties to continue their efforts to establish a genuine national reconciliation policy and an autonomous government in Bougainville.

I cannot conclude without expressing my delegation's support for the Secretary-General's proposal to extend UNPOB'S mandate for another 12-month period, beginning in 1 January 2003. We remain confident that that will greatly benefit the completion of the peace process undertaken in Papua New Guinea, which will be another success to the credit of the United Nations.

Mr. Corr (Ireland): First of all, I wish to thank you, Mr. President, for arranging today's open meeting. It is especially important to hear the views of the countries in the region and to thank them for their engagement and cooperation in the peace process. Like previous speakers, I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Prendergast for his comprehensive briefing on the peace process in Bougainville.

Ireland strongly supports the recommendation of the Secretary-General and the request of the Government of Papua New Guinea that the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) be extended for another 12 months. Prime Minister Somare said earlier this month that promising peace is no longer enough; we must help people realize the practical potential of peace. The Prime Minister reaffirmed that the peace process remains a national priority. My delegation warmly welcomes that commitment.

The meeting of the Peace Process Consultative Committee, held in Arawa on 30 October, agreed on a new target date of 24 December for completion of stage II of the agreed weapons disposal plan. It is now important that all sides make rapid progress towards meeting that goal, given a recent lack of momentum in the weapons disposal process, as we heard from Sir Kieran Prendergast this morning.

In that area, of course, UNPOB has a critical role to play, since its verification and certification roles become the trigger for implementation of agreed arrangements for autonomy and for the guarantee of a referendum among Bougainvilleans on Bougainville's political future. There is now a good prospect that stage III of weapons disposal — a decision on the final phase of the weapons, which would see most, if not all, of them destroyed — can be completed by the middle of 2003, thus allowing for elections for an autonomous government in Bougainville.

It remains essential that the United Nations maintain its full support and engagement with regard to

the process now well under way. Much progress has already been achieved, including on the amnesty and pardons issue. The Bougainville Constitutional Commission has been at work consulting the people of Bougainville, and it will soon begin to draft the Bougainville Constitution. All of that progress must continue.

The United Nations Political Office in Bougainville is extremely modest in terms of resources and personnel, as the representative of Singapore pointed out. Under the leadership of Ambassador Sinclair, it has done an excellent job in meeting its goals and in working to build peace and to advance agreed objectives, especially with regard to weapons disposal. There will always be some moves backward and forward in such an interlinked political and disarmament process; what is important is to maintain clarity of focus on the task ahead. UNPOB does that admirably.

UNPOB's finishing its work is something that matters to the people of Bougainville, of Papua New Guinea and of the region. At small financial cost but with great gains for peace, UNPOB remains critical to the completion of the process. We should therefore focus, not on rigid time frames, but on benchmarks in how it completes that work, and by that standard it is doing very well. Today, it is also right to express particular appreciation to the Peace Monitoring Group countries — Australia, Fiji, New Zealand and Vanuatu — for their crucial contribution to and work in the process.

The year ahead will be an active one for United Nations engagement in Bougainville. Stages II and III of the weapons disposal process and the critical determination that the United Nations must make in certifying that the process is complete will be major challenges. The pre-election period will also be a time when sound judgement and advice will be called for. In addition, as Ambassador Koonjul and others have pointed out this morning, the extremely bleak economic situation of Bougainville is a factor of which the international community, including the United Nations agencies, will have to take substantial account in the year ahead. What is important now is to maintain our full support for the peace process and to allow UNPOB to finish its work.

Mrs. d'Achon (France) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having organized this meeting, and to thank Sir Kieran Prendergast for his very useful briefing.

It is clear from Sir Kieran's briefing that, after the encouraging progress in the first half of this year, the peace process in Bougainville has recently experienced delays and difficulties. We see three reasons for this. First of all, delays in the weapons collection plan could delay the peace process as a whole. Completion of stage II was scheduled for September and that has been extended to 24 December. Secondly, there is the fragility of the mechanisms for compensation and reintegration, which has led to some frustration. The Governments of Papua New Guinea and Australia have promised sizeable sums for the parties and this is an element that is vital to the success of the process. We hope that these amounts will soon be able to be used in a balanced way for disarmament, compensation and also development purposes.

Thirdly, there have been weapons stolen for compensation purposes. This causes delay in the arms collection. We share the analysis of the Secretariat that this is not a sign that the fighting will resume, but rather a sign of a wish to obtain funds and that wish should not be encouraged.

The period that lies ahead will be decisive. The deadline of 24 December for weapons collection is a date that must be respected if we are not to see the peace process endangered and the two other sectors at an impasse. In this respect, Sir Kieran mentioned the prospect of elections in the second half of 2003 and I would like to take up a question that was raised by the Ambassador of Mexico in this regard. In Sir Kieran's opinion, will the time periods be met for stage III and what could the Political Office do so that the elections can be held as scheduled?

There are other elements besides the peace process. Prospects have improved somewhat with the establishment of a weapons collections system by the Alpha Company based on the Bougainville Agreement. But many problems remain. As many delegations have said, there is the refusal of Francis Ona to come back into the peace process.

And lastly, and here again I am repeating what other speakers have said before me, the economic situation is still serious on the island and this could jeopardize the prospects for lasting peace. The mobilization of the international community remains more necessary than ever. It is in this context that the

Security Council must consider the question of mandate renewal for the Political Office.

The French delegation feels that two elements need to be taken into account. First, the Political Office is playing a major role in the peace process. Given the important deadlines coming up in the first half of 2003, it seems hard to imagine that the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville should not be present at that time. On the other hand, we do not want to encourage extensive delays in the process. The mandate was to come to an end at the end of 2002, according to the original agreement, so we would like to see the extension of the mandate accompanied by important progress to make up for the delays.

Mr. Tidjani (Cameroon) (*spoke in French*): May I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this public meeting on Bougainville. I would also like to thank Sir Kieran Prendergast for his very informative briefing, especially on the issue of Bougainville. During the briefing of the Council of 29 August, we welcomed the progress achieved. Similarly, in his report on the work of the Organization to the current General Assembly, the Secretary-General emphasized the progress achieved in the implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement signed on 30 August 2001, as well as the essential role played by the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) in the destruction of collected weapons. This was an operation in which a well-informed population cooperated fully. Since then, there have been some setbacks and Sir Kieran has given us some information on the difficulties which in the view of my delegation, should not at all discourage the efforts under way, given the importance of the approaching deadlines in this operation, especially the elections in June 2003.

The decision of the former combatants to conclude the operation by December and the agreement to cooperate on the part of Mee' Kamui in the elimination of weapons are encouraging and hopeful. At this stage, I would like to say how much my delegation appreciates the quality and effectiveness of the cooperation between UNPOB and the members of the Pacific Islands Forum, who are neighbours and who have been providing contingents for the Peace Monitoring Group for the implementation of the truce and the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

We see this as a significant illustration of positive interaction between the United Nations and regional organizations, something we most earnestly desire. Success is, of course, partial, although we welcome it. It is the result both of the determination of the parties to settle their disputes peacefully and also of the intervention of the international community, especially the United Nations and the Pacific Islands Forum group of States. I agree with the United States delegation that we need a road map to enable us to have an overall view of efforts that are still needed to achieve the final objectives of the process under way.

This momentum towards peace should be sustained and supported. This is why Cameroon will give its full support to the extension of the mandate of UNPOB, whose essential role is recognized by all parties. Similarly, Cameroon agrees with the Secretary-General's proposal to extend UNPOB's mandate by 12 months.

My delegation would also like to thank the donor community for their valuable financial contributions, as well as the relevant activities undertaken by non-governmental organizations in achieving the Bougainville process and in the many areas of reconstruction. We would encourage them to continue with their efforts and to strengthen their joint participation in this lofty common endeavour for the dawning of peace and sustainable development that will no doubt benefit the entire region.

In conclusion, I would like to reaffirm the support of my delegation to UNPOB and all of its staff and reiterate our encouragement of their tireless efforts.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I want first of all to thank Sir Kieran Prendergast for the valuable information he has given us and for the data sheet circulated. This is undoubtedly a very useful tool to keep this Council up-to-date.

On several occasions, we have received first-hand information from the head of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) on the progress in the peace process in Bougainville. In December of last year we received good news about the Peace Agreement that was signed in Arawa in August 2001 and the three components of the Agreement: autonomy, the referendum and the weapons collection programme. On that occasion, the members of the Security Council welcomed the signing of that Agreement.

Adoption by parliament on 27 March in a second round of the constitutional reforms needed for the adoption of the peace agreement was an important step and was highlighted as such by the Security Council. In this regard, we must recognize the positive role that UNPOB has played under Ambassador Noel Sinclair. Members of the Security Council, including our own delegation, have underscored the importance of the prompt and effective implementation of the weapons collection plan. Nonetheless, as has rightly been mentioned, the weapons disposal plan has been stagnating, and all indications are that it will be difficult to complete that process within the new time frame. The account given by Sir Kieran Prendergast in his briefing would seem to bear that out, as the impatience of former combatants and the campaign to discredit the process seem inauspicious in that respect.

Another matter of concern — this, too, was mentioned in earlier statements — is the economic situation in Bougainville, as well as in Papua New Guinea in general. With regard to the economic situation in Bougainville, it has been said that what little there was has been destroyed by the armed conflict. At present, there is no medium-sized or large-scale industry, but merely a subsistence economy. In the past, Ambassador Sinclair has been emphatic in saying that a failure to improve the economic situation would have a negative impact on the attitude of the population towards the Peace Agreement and would make it more difficult to reintegrate former combatants.

Since the signing of the Lincoln Agreement in January 1998, the peace process in Papua New Guinea has been making slow but steady progress. We hope that that trend will not be reversed now. The new Government of Sir Michael Somare is also committed to implementing the Agreement. The international community must continue to support this process. In this regard, we also want to acknowledge the work that has been done by the members of the Peace Monitoring Group — Australia, New Zealand, Fiji and Vanuatu.

The weapons disposal plan is of considerable importance. Some progress has been made, but we know that a great deal remains to be done. Under the Arawa Agreement, UNPOB must certify that the weapons have been collected as a precondition for the holding of the referendum in Bougainville.

Having said this, we support the extension of the mandate of UNPOB in terms that will ensure that a further contribution can be made to the process.

Mr. Harrison (United Kingdom): I should like, through you, Mr. President, to thank Sir Kieran Prendergast for his very useful and informative introduction to our discussion.

We start from the basis that the United Nations operation in Bougainville has been, and is, a notable success. My delegation would like to repeat the tributes that we have paid in the past to Ambassador Sinclair and his team; we believe that the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) has been not just a success but, perhaps, a model for other operations throughout the world. The United Nations in this case has made a real difference to the political problems of Bougainville.

It is important not to jeopardize that success by a precipitate end to the United Nations contribution in Bougainville. But equally, we believe that it is very important for us to start thinking about a clear exit strategy that will define what is needed in the future from the United Nations, as well as the period over which it is needed. In this context, we are studying carefully the aide-memoire that the delegation of Papua New Guinea circulated yesterday, 20 November.

The peace process is clearly still at a vulnerable stage. I think that Sir Kieran's phrase — he said that it was "under some strain" — sums it up well. It is clear that the United Nations work in Bougainville is incomplete. It is important that the dire economic situation in Papua New Guinea and the instability elsewhere — for example in the southern highlands — not put at risk the progress that has been made on Bougainville.

It is also good news that the combatants have agreed to work towards the deadline of 24 December, and it is important for that deadline to be respected. We remain concerned that weapons collection remains some way from completion, although of course 100 per cent elimination is probably impossible. Weapons that have circulated to the southern highlands could just as easily return. But we are pleased that UNPOB's focus is now moving towards rehabilitation, and we have been happy to switch a contribution of 25,000 pounds, which was surplus to requirements for weapons collection, to rehabilitation projects instead.

We have noted carefully the Secretary-General's recommendation that UNPOB's mandate be extended, and we support that extension. We also note the results of the recent assessment mission. As regards the timing of any extension, we have an open mind at the moment. We believe that the issue needs further discussion. But we think that a number of important issues will need to be taken into account in considering the timing. The first is, of course, the need for an exit strategy, to which I alluded earlier. The second is a point raised by Sir Kieran Prendergast about the time that UNPOB will need in order to verify stage II and work further on that aspect. The third is the elections that are due in June next year but which may, indeed, be postponed. I think that it will be important for Council members to consider those and all other relevant issues before coming to a decision on the exact timing.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): I should now like to make a statement in my capacity as the representative of China.

First of all, I should like to thank Under-Secretary-General Prendergast for his briefing. Since the deliberations of the Security Council in August this year, the peace process in Bougainville has, with the cooperation of the new Government of Papua New Guinea, been steadily moving forward, and China is gratified by that. We hope that all sides will continue to take a positive and flexible position and advance the process of the eventual peaceful settlement of the Bougainville question. All sides are comprehensively implementing the relevant provisions of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. On the whole, significant progress has been achieved with regard to weapons collection, although some problems have cropped up in this work. Whether or not that task can continue to be carried out smoothly will have a great impact on the peace process.

The United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) has always played an important role in weapons collection. It has also won the trust of all sides. At the moment, the collection work has not been completed and the peace process is at a crucial point. In view of this, China supports full consideration of the request made by the parties concerned. We support the extension of the mandate of UNPOB for one year so that the Political Office can continue to play its proper role in the peace process. Over a long period, the Political Office, under the leadership of Ambassador Sinclair, has done very effective work. China wishes to express its appreciation for that and we will, as in the past, support the efforts of the Office in this regard.

I resume my functions as President of the Council.

The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Papua New Guinea, on whom I now call.

Mr. Aisi (Papua New Guinea): I, like previous speakers, would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this open meeting and for giving me the opportunity to speak on this issue of great importance to my country. I would also like to thank Sir Kieran Prendergast for his briefing at this meeting, as well as each and every one of the members for their constructive and helpful comments.

The conflict that has plagued my country for the past 10 years has been the preoccupation of four consecutive Governments, which have devoted much time and energy and many resources to it. The peace process has, of course, been given the highest priority and attention by all previous Governments — especially the most recent — as well as by the current Government under the leadership of the Prime Minister, The Right Honourable Sir Michael Somare.

It also gives me great pleasure to inform the Council that positive progress has been made on the three principal fronts: peace and reconciliation; arms disposal; and constitutional reforms — this last issue being an unprecedented achievement, as there was no provision or precedent appropriate to Bougainville's post-conflict situation within the constitutional framework of Papua New Guinea.

The Council is well aware that under the previous Government, the former Minister for Bougainville Affairs, Sir Moi Avei, introduced the proposed constitutional amendments and the Organic Law in Parliament in January and March 2002. On that occasion, the National Parliament of Papua New Guinea voted overwhelmingly in support of the proposed constitutional amendments to add part XIV to the national Constitution and to bring into effect the new Organic Law on Peace-Building in Bougainville — Autonomous Bougainville Government and Bougainville Referendum. No votes were cast against the amendments, which showed the

very high priority and utmost seriousness given to the issue by the Government and the people of Papua New Guinea.

The votes required two-thirds absolute majority of the 109 members of the national Parliament. The recorded votes were 84 and 86, respectively, with no dissenting vote.

All parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement as well as regional and international friends and agencies, including the United Nations observer mission in Bougainville, headed by Ambassador Noel Sinclair, are working earnestly, with unity of purpose, to consolidate and build peace on the ground. I wish to express our gratitude to Ambassador Noel Sinclair for the wonderful job that he has done in helping Papua New Guinea in this process.

I wish also to place on record our gratitude for the regional initiative from our close friends and neighbours, especially the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Tonga, in the early stages, for their continued support and involvement in the regional Peace Monitoring Group on the island of Bougainville.

My Government also recognizes the involvement of many other Governments and international organizations and agencies that have come forward in the provision of assistance in respect to peace-building, reconciliation and restoration, and other sectoral development assistance to Bougainville. These include the Governments of Japan and of the United Kingdom; the European Union; the United Nations Development Programme; the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); and non-governmental organizations such as churches, the Red Cross and Médecins Sans Frontières.

Here in New York, the efforts of many, including those of the members of the Security Council, the Pacific Islands Forum missions and others, in close cooperation with the Secretary-General and the United Nations observer mission in Bougainville, are providing the necessary catalytic role in managing the dialogue process between all affected parties.

I should also like to thank the Secretary-General, all States Members of the United Nations, especially those immediate past and present members of the Security Council, for continuing to renew the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB), so that it can support arms collection and disposal.

I need not repeat the excellent exposition given here by Sir Kieran Prendergast when he presented the Secretary-General's report. Suffice it to say that my Government confirms that the first and second stages of the arms collection are progressing well and nearing completion. Stage III of the arms-disposal process remains to be accomplished. We all agree that this aspect is a very important part of the peace process.

I wish also to express my Government's sincere gratitude for the Council's continued support of our request for the mandate of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville to be extended. We are appearing today once again to request the same for another, and final, 12 months.

The proposed timetable set out in the August 2002 aide- mémoire still stands, but, as can be noted by the Council, it has slowed somewhat due to many factors, including those mentioned this morning by Sir Kieran. But we believe that there are definite milestones outlined in that aide-mémoire, supplemented by the aide-mémoire that has been circulated this morning, to ensure a proper exit by the parties. Therefore, the Government of Papua New Guinea is confident and optimistic that the issue will be resolved by the time requested, or, hopefully earlier.

This was also aptly reaffirmed by the Prime Minister, Sir Michael Somare, during his meeting with the Secretary- General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in New York on 18 October 2002.

In conclusion, we believe that this peace mission can be a success if we all work together.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Australia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): I wish to thank you, Sir, for holding this open-format meeting on an issue which, obviously enough, is of deep interest to the countries of the Pacific Islands Forum. It is only appropriate, surely, that the countries of our region, as contributors to the resolution of the Bougainville conflict, should also be involved in the Security Council's deliberations. We also very much appreciate the very useful and comprehensive briefing provided by Kieran Prendergast this morning. We want to thank

him and his team for the efforts they are making, in difficult circumstances, to bring this conflict to a close.

Australia strongly supports the continued engagement of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB). We are encouraged by the progress achieved in the Bougainville settlement efforts. Much has been achieved; nevertheless, a good deal remains to be done before the peace process will be complete. The involvement of the United Nations has been, and remains, an essential element of the overall process, and it will be important that the United Nations remain engaged well into 2003.

But the presence of the United Nations needs to be genuinely catalytic; it should be a spur to the parties to re-energize and successfully conclude, for example, the weapons-disposal process. The parties must understand that the presence of the United Nations and that of the Peace Monitoring Group is of a limited duration. Every effort should be made while they are on the ground to accelerate progress. Under no circumstances should their presence — comforting though it might be — become the cause of delay or of putting back hard decisions. The Group's presence cannot and should not substitute for committed implementation by the parties of peace and weapons-disposal measures.

In this context, the recent slowdown in weapons disposal and the removal of weapons from containers has been, unquestionably, a setback. It risks undermining the confidence that the parties and the international community have in the peace process. That said, opportunities exist, and must be taken, to re-energize weapons-disposal efforts, especially through UNPOB and the parties urging all ex-combatants to conclude weapons disposal and destruction as soon as possible in 2003. Bougainvillean ex-combatants have identified 24 December 2002 as a target date for the conclusion of stage II of the weapons-disposal process. We welcome that decision.

The target may be achievable, but it will require UNPOB, in consultation with the parties, to redouble its efforts to speed up stage II containment efforts and help bring about the earliest possible declaration that this stage of the weapons-disposal process is complete.

The final fate of the weapons — stage III — is to be decided within four and a half months of the stage II declaration. We believe that, unless current rates of progress are lifted substantially, UNPOB will have little prospect of concluding its work until late in 2003. UNPOB has monitoring and verification responsibilities for contained weapons throughout stage III. It will be important for the success and integrity of settlement efforts that this process be advanced expeditiously. It will be difficult for the United Nations to depart while weapons remain in containers under its lock and key.

The declaration by UNPOB that stage II has been completed is the trigger for the constitutional amendments giving force to the autonomy provisions of the Bougainville Peace Agreement. UNPOB has recommended a Bougainville-wide consultation process to determine the general level of security felt in the respective districts. That is a sensible proposal. It would be helpful, however, if the process were undertaken concurrently with stage II containments.

It goes without saying, of course, that the views of the Papua New Guinea Government will also be a factor in the acceptance by all parties of the validity of any stage II declaration. UNPOB will need to consult closely and early with the Government of Papua New Guinea to ensure that its definition of "substantial compliance" is accepted by all parties, including the Papua New Guinea Government.

I want to conclude by underlining Australia's support for the Bougainville peace process and for UNPOB, including through the Peace Monitoring Group. It is precisely because we want to see the process brought to a successful and durable conclusion that we have emphasized the need for a redoubling of efforts to make progress on weapons disposal. This will also enable the other downstream benefits of peace, not least, of course, economic development and autonomy, to begin to make a real and welcome difference to what have been the blighted lives of the people of Bougainville for far too long.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Fiji. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Naidu (Fiji): I thank you, Mr. President, for giving me the opportunity to speak at this meeting on the very important issue of the Bougainville peace process in Papua New Guinea. I make this statement on behalf of the members of the Pacific Islands Forum that are Members of the United Nations, including Australia, Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands,

the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, the Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, Fiji.

This issue has been on the agenda of the Security Council since 1999 but has, of course, affected one of our neighbouring countries, Papua New Guinea, for a much longer time. Consecutive Governments in Papua New Guinea have given the highest priority and greatest attention to this issue, including the current Government of Prime Minister The Right Honourable Sir Michael Somare.

The Security Council is well aware that our subregion has played a significant role in supporting Papua New Guinea through our own regional initiative of a Peace Monitoring Group on Bougainville. We are all determined to see the successful conclusion of the current peace process, which shows all positive signs of success. As the Council is well aware, through the efforts and resources of the Governments of Australia and New Zealand, and ably supported by the Kingdom of Tonga and Solomon Islands — in the early stages — and Vanuatu and my own country, Fiji, we mounted and have continued the regional Peace Monitoring Group efforts.

It therefore gives me pleasure to learn from the Secretary-General and our Papua New Guinean colleague, Ambassador Robert Aisi, that positive progress has been made on the three principal fronts: peace and reconciliation, arms disposal and constitutional reforms. It is also heartening to learn that regional and international friends and agencies, including the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOV), headed by Ambassador Noel Sinclair, are working diligently to consolidate peace.

We recognize the involvement of other Governments and international non-governmental organizations, organizations and agencies in providing assistance to peace-building, reconciliation, restoration and other sectoral development assistance to Bougainville. They include the Governments of Japan and the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United Nations Development Programme, churches, non-governmental organizations, the Red Cross and Doctors Without Frontiers. Here in New York, the efforts of many, including the members of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and UNPOV, are providing the necessary catalytic role in managing the dialogue process among all affected parties.

Although the proposed timetable set out in the Papua New Guinea Government's August 2002 aide-memoire has slowed somewhat, we very much hope that stage II of the weapons disposal can be completed as now planned, by 24 December. There is also a good prospect that stage III of the weapons disposal can be completed by the middle of 2003, thus paving the way for elections for an autonomous Bougainville government.

It must be emphasised, however, that meeting deadlines for weapons disposal will not happen automatically. It will require energy and the firm commitment of all the parties and the continued active engagement of the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville in facilitating the peace process.

While we as a subregion remain committed to supporting the Peace Monitoring Group until the peace process is firmly established, it is in the interest of all of us to move forward as quickly as possible and to see the process become increasingly autonomous as it draws to a successful conclusion. Against that background, the Pacific Islands Forum Group supports the extension of the UNPOB mandate for whatever period is required.

The President (*spoke in Chinese*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of New Zealand. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. MacKay (New Zealand): Mr. President, allow me to join the others who have expressed appreciation to you for holding this open meeting of the Council, and also to Sir Kieran Prendergast for the very comprehensive and, in our view, very accurate reflection of the situation on the ground in Bougainville.

My delegation is, of course, associated with the statement made by the delegation of Fiji. This is, as has been noted, a process in which we and other members of the region have now been involved for a number of years. As our colleague from Papua New Guinea has said, the process has slowed a little due to a number of factors, but we nevertheless remain very encouraged by the progress which has been made. More remains to be done, but things are certainly heading very much in the right direction. This reflects a great deal of input from

the Government of Papua New Guinea, assisted by others within the region over the years.

In our own assessment, we see the peace process now entering its final stages. We think that there is, in fact, a reasonable prospect of a general completion of stage II of weapons disposal by 24 December this year. We also think that there is a good prospect that stage III can be completed by the middle of next year, thus paving the way for elections for an autonomous Bougainville government.

We very much agree with the view that has been expressed — unanimously expressed, I think — that the Peace Monitoring Group has a vital role to play until the peace process is firmly bedded in. We appreciated the expressions of support from members of the Council for an extension of the mandate of the Peace Monitoring Group for a further 12 months. We note this is also the period being sought by Papua New Guinea. We believe this 12-month period, recommended by the Secretary-General and requested by Papua New Guinea, has gained wide support within the Council. It is, in fact, the correct and appropriate period for an extension, and we would ask the Council to proceed accordingly on that basis.

Thank you again, Sir, for convening this meeting. It is a very useful opportunity for those of us from the region to participate in what is for us a crucial debate on a hugely important issue, not only for Papua New Guinea, but also for the rest of us from the region.

The President (spoke in Chinese): I now give the floor to Mr. Prendergast, to respond to comments and questions raised.

Mr. Prendergast: There have been a lot of questions and I will try to answer as many of them as I can. First, let me say we are very grateful for the many expressions of appreciation for the work of Noel Sinclair and his team. I know they work in very difficult conditions. It has been quite disruptive for them. For example I had to ask Noel Sinclair to cancel his participation in the meeting we had last month in Mont Pellerin, Switzerland, of representatives and special representatives of the Secretary-General, because of the timetable. We may have to ask him to cancel his Christmas leave for the same reason, and I know he and his team work with enormous dedication.

The first question was from the Ambassador of Mexico about the impact of the delay in certification of containment of weapons, the completion of stage II. If you would like to look at the aide memoire circulated by the Ambassador of New Guinea yesterday, you will find at the top of page 3, confirmation that the operation of the provisions on autonomy, in the Papua New Guinea constitution, and the guarantee of a referendum among Bougainvilleans on Bougainville's political future, which are in part XIV of that constitution, depend on verification and certification by the United Nations Political Office in Bougainville (UNPOB) that stage II of the agreed weapons disposal plan has been achieved. Obviously the practical implication is that weapons disposal must be completed before the regional autonomous government can be elected. Delay in completing the weapons disposal plan will inevitably mean delay in holding the elections.

The Ambassador of Mexico's second question was about the 30 June 2003 target. I think for reasons already explained, it is going to be difficult to meet that deadline, but we very much hope the delay will not be long. The Ambassador had a third question about the consequences of withdrawal of the Peace Monitoring Group. Our view would be that Papua New Guinea has a clear and irreplaceable role in weapons disposal and it would be very difficult, not impossible, but very difficult to complete weapons disposal without them. The Peace Monitoring Group is less centrally involved, less relevant to other aspects of the exercise, such as elections and the drafting of the constitution.

The second group of questions involve whether it is right or necessary to extend UNPOB for 12 months, when the Council was told by Ambassador Sinclair a while ago that the exercise would be completed by the end of 2002. Unfortunately, I think we know from much of the business of this Council that international affairs do not unroll in a tidy, predictable and mechanical way. As Robert Burns said "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men gang aft agley". I do not think anyone can argue that Bougainville was unique or even unusual in this. The Council has been quite understanding, in other conflicts, of the fact that timetables slip. I think it would be particularly unfortunate if the Council were not understanding in the case of a small operation in a country which is far from the centre of world affairs, whereas it is understanding in the case of countries which are more centrally situated, particularly since, as the Ambassador of Singapore mentioned, the cost of the operation for a whole year is very little more than the

cost of the operation of larger missions for one day. If my memory serves me right, for example, United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) costs about $1.63 million per day. We have certainly had delays in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and not only there.

We agree very much that there needs to be an exit strategy, there need to be benchmarks and the parties need to be kept to their obligations, but I think we need to recognize at the same time that progress in these matters is not linear. I think our preoccupation should be with the benchmarks and with pressing the parties to keep to those benchmarks, rather than trying to set more or less arbitrary timetables.

We would argue that the exit strategy should be linked to the election of an autonomous government, as indicated in the Bougainville Peace Agreement. There are concrete plans which have been made by Bougainvilleans themselves to complete weapons disposal by 24 December 2002. I described the two meetings that were held to that effect in my statement.

The Mission has concrete plans for carrying out certification and verification of stage II once it has been completed, and we would be happy to provide details of that.

If I may talk you through the arguments as to why, in our opinion, it will be necessary to have a 12-month extension to complete the process, rather than six months, I think the first point is that if the parties to the Bougainville Peace Agreement complete stage II by 24 December 2002, certification of the completion of that part of the weapons disposal plan could not begin until the Alfa Company of Francis Ona reconciles with its neighbours and contains its weapons as well. That means all of Bougainville could only be covered by stage II of the weapons disposal plan by March 2003.

Certification of stage II of the weapons disposal plan would require UNPOB to consult all Bougainville communities regarding their views and perceptions of the Peace Process in general and of implementation of the weapons disposal plan in particular. The objective of those consultations will be to establish whether, at the grassroots level, people feel safe and secure and conditions are conducive to holding the elections for the Bougainville autonomous government. We estimate it could take up to three months to finish this exercise, assuming the weather would allow the use of helicopters. We are in an environment where there is very little infrastructure, particularly transport infrastructure and therefore we are heavily dependent on use of the helicopter to get around Bougainville.

On that timetable, by say May or June 2003, the certification should be submitted to the Papua New Guinea Government and then preparations could begin for holding the elections for an autonomous Bougainville government.

I think we would argue — and I have done so already — that the withdrawal of UNPOB should be tied to the election of a Bougainville autonomous government. As we see it today, that seems likely to take place only in the second half of 2003. Past United Nations experience in other areas shows that the mission should stay for a little while after the election, as a confidence-building measure, prior to its disengagement. If we take all of that as a whole, we would conclude that, with good luck and some determination and effort, the peace process ought to become irreversible by the end of next year, which would trigger the withdrawal of UNPOB.

I do not want to give the Council too many British maxims, but there is another one about not spoiling the ship for a ha'p'orth of tar. We have come a long way, and I think it is worthwhile seeing this process through to the end. In the time that I have been working in the Secretariat, one has seen instances where the Council has not stayed the course; and we are having to live with the consequences of that. I am thinking, for example, of the Central African Republic, where there is a very wide perception that peacekeepers were put in reluctantly and withdrawn prematurely — meaning therefore that we more or less guaranteed the failure of the post-conflict period. I think it would be a great pity to do that in Bougainville, when we are talking about an operation that costs about $2 million for a whole year.

The President *(spoke in Chinese)*: I thank Mr. Prendergast for the clarifications and answers he has provided.

There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.